



Repentance: The Key to Forgiveness

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Forgiveness means letting go of past violations in the hope of saving a relationship. Some social science researchers believe an apology followed by solution-focused communication paves the way. It works so well in the university's counseling lab!

In everyday life, an apology can actually block the way to forgiveness by trivializing the offense and insulting the offended person. "I'm sorry" can mean "I'm sorry I was caught." "I made a mistake" can mean "You are a hypocritical perfectionist!" "I never meant to hurt you" may simply be untrue. Well-intentioned pastors, friends and family often miss these hidden messages. Unwittingly, they can join the violator in demeaning the violated person and pressuring him/her to overlook infidelity, abuse, and other serious problems.

Repentance is the key to forgiveness. It is a biblical word denoting the will to think and act from a higher point of view.

Repentance is not an apology. It is an awakening. For example:

Apology

I made a mistake.
I never meant to hurt you.
It will never happen again.
You must understand why I did it.
I said I was sorry, now you should forgive me.

Repentance

I made a calculation.
I knew it would hurt you.
I am likely to do it again.
I must understand why I did it.
I will rebuild my integrity and hope someday you will forgive me.

Repentance is the first step to reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust because it confesses real wrongdoing and accepts personal responsibility without blaming.